

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 6112

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, EG

SUBJECT: ISRAELI ACTIONS IN GULF OF SUEZ

REF: TEL AVIV 6106

1. I SAW EVRON (MFA) AT DINNER SEPTEMBER 6. WE DISCUSSED AT SOME LENGTH RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AMOCO CASE, IN COURSE OF WHICH I REAFFIRMED WITH SOME HEAT OUR PROTEST OF THE PREVIOUS DAY (REF). EVRON SAID HE AND PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS OF LEADERSHIP HAD BEEN APPALLED TO LEARN THAT ISRAELI GUNBOAT HAD FIRED ON THE AMOCO BUOYS -- IN DEFIANCE OF ALLON'S ASSURANCES THAT THERE WOULD BE NO HARASSMENT. BOAT, WHICH HE SAID HAD 21-YEAR OLD SKIPPER, WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO USE ITS GUNS IN THAT WAY AND HE WAS SURE THAT ISRAELI MINISTERS SHARED HIS REGRET THAT THERE HAD BEEN FIRING.

2. HE SAID THAT AFTER CHECKING INTO MATTER HE WAS CONVINCED THAT IDF INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS HAD NOT RPT NOT KNOWN OF FIRING WHEN THEY BRIEFED OUR ATTACHES ON SATURDAY NIGHT. EVRON SAID THAT WE MAY FIND THIS HARD TO BELIEVE BUT HE WAS CERTAIN ON THIS POINT. I SAID I HAVE TWO OBSERVATIONS TO MAKE: (1) INCIDENT CLEARLY REVEALED NEED TO TIGHTEN ISRAELI COMMAND STRUCTURE AND (2) IF ISRAELIS RESORTED TO LIES WITH U.S GOVERNMENT THEY WOULD INDEED BE IN DEEP AND DANGEROUS WATER. EVRON SAID THAT WHILE ISRAELIS MAY NOT ALWAYS TELL US EVERYTHING, THEY WOULD NOT DELIBERATELY

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LIE TO US.

3. EVRON REFERRED TO SPECIAL SESSION OF KNESSET CALLED FOR SEPTEMBER 7 TO DISCUSS INTER ALIA EGYPTIAN VIOLATIONS OF SINAI II AGREEMENT. HE SAID THAT GOVERNMENT WAS UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE ON THIS ISSUE AND TO MEET U.S. DEMANDS WITH RESPECT TO OIL EXPLORATION IN GULF WOULD RUN SERIOUS RISK OF "SINKING RABIN GOVERNMENT". SINAI II AGREEMENT WAS IN FACT MADE TO ORDER FOR CONSTANT EROSION BY EGYPTIANS AND ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT EGYPTIANS ARE CONSISTENTLY DOING JUST THAT. LATEST EGYPTIAN MOVE IN THIS REGARD IS ATTEMPT TO USE AMERICAN OIL COMPANY TO ENCROACH INTO ISRAELI-HELD PART OF GULF. HE BELIEVED THAT EGYPTIANS HAD ASKED AMOCO TO DRILL EAST OF MEDIAN LINE AND HAD SET SEPTEMBER 21 DEADLINE TO FORCE ISSUE.

4. I RESPONDED THAT U.S. POSITION ON OIL EXPLORATION IN GULF HAD BEEN MADE VERY CLEAR AND WE COULD NOT ACCEPT HIS LABELLING OF THE LEGITIMATE AMOCO DRILLING OPERATION AS AN EGYPTIAN PLOY. HOWEVER, OUR PROBLEM NOW IS TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THE PRESENT IMPASSE. AMOCO IS PRESSING FOR AN EARLY RETURN TO THE DISPUTED AREA. EVRON REPLIED THAT WHILE HE DID NOT HAVE AN OFFICIAL PROPOSAL TO PRESENT HE WOULD, ON HIS OWN, SUGGEST A POSSIBLE SOLUTION. HE STRESSED THAT HE WAS SPEAKING ON PERSONAL BASIS AND ASKED THAT HIS NAME NOT BE LINKED WITH FOLLOWING PROPOSAL.

5. EVRON SUGGESTED THAT WE EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF AN ARRANGEMENT REACHED BETWEEN U.S. AND ISRAELI GOVERNMENTS WHICH WOULD ALLOW AMOCO TO DRILL AT SITE 304.1, BUT IN NO OTHER NEW SITES EAST OF MEDIA LINE PENDING FURTHER DISCUSSIONS OR RESOLUTION OF LEGAL ISSUE. WHEN ASKED ABOUT POSSIBLE ADVERSE REACTION IN ISRAEL TO MARINER'S RETURN TO DISPUTED SITE, EVRON SAID THAT HE THOUGHT GOI COULD HANDLE PUBLIC RELATIONS ASPECT BY EXPLAINING THAT 304.1 IS PART OF RAMADAN FIELD WHERE AMOCO HAS BEEN OPERATING FOR YEARS IN CERTAIN AREAS WHICH ARE IN FACT EAST OF MEDIAN LINE. WE TOLD EVRON THAT WE WOULD HAVE A LOOK AT HIS SUGGESTION AND BE BACK IN TOUCH.

6. COMMENT: THIS CONVERSATION PREDATED ARRIVAL OF
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SECRETARY'S INSTRUCTIONS TO DISCUSS AMOCO ISSUE WITH RABIN. I AM NOW REQUESTING URGENT APPOINTMENT WITH PRIME MINISTER AND WILL MAKE POINTS CITED REFTEL 220759. MEANWHILE, I HOPE ALL ADDRESSEES WILL TAKE CAREFUL LOOK AT EVRON'S SUGGESTION WHICH WHILE CHARACTERIZED AS PERSONAL I TEND TO BELIEVE HAS SUPPORT AT HIGH ISRAELI LEVELS. SOMETHING LIKE THIS MAY SURFACE AT MY MEETING WITH RABIN, AND WE SHOULD BE PREPARED SOONEST TO REACT. PROPOSAL DOES PRO-

VIDE WAY TO PERMIT MARINER TO RURN TO DISPUTED SITE AND
ALSO TO AVOID DANGEROUS CONFRONTATION WITH ISRAELIS.
WHILE LAWYERS MAY ARGUE THAT OUR ACCEPTANCE WOULD BE PRE-
JUDICIAL WE COULD MAKE CLEAR TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED
THAT INTERIM ARRANGEMENT DOES NOT AFFECT OUR LEGAL POSI-
TION ON OIL EXPLORATION IN GULF NOR PREJUDGE OUR POSITION
IN ANY FUTURE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE AREA.
TOON

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